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DEPARTMENT FOR IIP/CTCC JAMES VAN DE VELDE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [RW](#)
SUBJECT: RWANDA: CREDIBLE VOICES IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
REF: STATE 122288

Classified By: Ambassador Michael R. Arietti, reason 1.4 (B/D)

(C) Rwanda's Islamic community is small and inward-looking, functions both of its status as a neglected minority population for much of Rwanda's modern history as well as Rwanda's own general isolation from the rest of the world. In the wake of the 1994 genocide, Rwanda has created a cooperative system of constitutional government in which all political, social and religious groups participate. Given this specific historical context, Muslims do not raise their voices as independent advocates for any brand of religious particularism that could upset the hard-won social peace and personal security Rwandans now enjoy. It is thus difficult to identify prominent Muslims who would be willing to speak out to international audiences on subjects that do not have a direct impact on local efforts to rebuild Rwanda. With that brief introduction, we offer the following person for consideration as a "credible voice" in the Rwandan Muslim community:

--Bio Data

Name: Sheikh Saleh Habimana
Title: Mufti of Rwanda
DPOB: Rwamagana, January 2, 1960
Education: Bachelor degree in Islamic Call, Tripoli, Libya

--Area of Influence

Limited to Rwanda, although he does participate in regional multi-faith gatherings.

--Audience

Rwandan Muslims

--Forums

Muslim educational institutions, mosques, family gatherings, regional inter-faith events; plans exist to establish a Muslim radio station.

--Disagreements with US policy

Mufti Habimana has been critical of US intervention in Iraq.

--Advocating violence against the US.

No known record of such.

--Position on jihad

Not a known advocate of jihad.

--Derogatory information

There are accounts that he had helped himself to donor funds, degree of cupidity unknown.

--Known calls for violence against this individual

None

--His relationship with USG

Sent on International Visitor program in 2003-4. Has several times spoken at the Embassy's annual genocide memorial service for local employees. DOD has funded the construction of several Muslim schools; an initiative recognized by the Mufti.

ARIETTI